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ABSTRACT

The success of Computer Science Applications 109, Information Retrieval Skills, at Doane College (Nebraska) is the result of a team effort. Until the fall of 1993, the class was taught by a single instructor. During the training of a new librarian, it was discovered that a team approach might benefit the students as well as the library faculty, and a new course in computerized searching was begun. This paper discusses the advantages and drawbacks of team teaching, course content, and teaching methodology. Advantages of library team teaching include: having two instructors instead of one to assist students; livelier and less formal classroom atmosphere; cooperative learning environment, as modeled by the instructors; individual instructor workload is lessened; reduced instructor stress associated with bibliographic instruction due to support of additional instructor; and it is easier to revise and update course content. Drawbacks include: the success of the course is dependent upon the success of the teaching team partnership; instructors must be in agreement in front of students; librarians must discuss student special circumstances and agree on a course of action; and time constraints on other library staff as both librarians must be absent from the library at the same time. The class research paper search strategy handout and final project assignment are appended. (Author/SWC)

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TWO HEADS ARE BETTER THAN ONE: TEAM TEACHING IN THE INFORMATION AGE

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ABSTRACT

The success of Computer Science Applications 109, Information Retrieval Skills, is the result of a team effort. Until the fall of 1993, the class was taught by a single instructor. During the training of a new librarian, it was discovered that a team approach might benefit the students as well as the library faculty, and a new course in computerized searching was born. This paper will discuss the advantages and drawbacks of team teaching, course content, and teaching methodology.

Doane College, a small, private liberal arts college in Nebraska, recognizes the importance of library research skills and is dedicated to maintaining high standards in bibliographic instruction. In 1988, due to the computerization of reference tools, the need to add a classroom component to the library skills program became apparent. A collaborative effort was initiated involving three departments. The library would be responsible for teaching research skills, the Computer Science Department would teach computer manipulation, and the English Department would instruct students in style manuals and written projects. Scheduling conflicts forced a change in the original vision when it became impossible for the Computer Science and English departments to participate. The

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result was a one credit, four week course offered for the first time in 1990 and taught solely by a librarian.

The premise of the class is to teach transferable research skills, such as Boolean operators and truncation, using H. W. Wilson's CD-ROM indexes and Silver Platter's ERIC as representative databases. The class is structured around a research strategy (Appendix A) which students follow to complete individual bibliographies as the culminating project (Appendix B).

Originally, only one section per semester of Information Retrieval Skills was needed. Due to increasing enrollment, up to six sections were offered in the 1992-93 academic year. To accommodate the increased demand for this course, a second librarian began teaching half the sections. During the collaborative planning process, the idea for team teaching was born.

Since Fall 1994, the course has been team taught by two librarians. The goal has always been to use the instructors' individual strengths to increase learning for students. Strengths were defined differently than traditionally cited in the literature. Unlike librarians such as Morganti and Buckalew (1991, 196) who divided the course content and assigned class sessions according to subject expertise, the elements of teaching (including preparation, grading, and oral presentation) were divided according to personal preferences and perceived abilities.

Although each librarian has taught the course alone and is capable of handling all elements, it was decided to allocate the primary responsibilities as

previously stated. One librarian does the majority of the oral presentations and corrects all quizzes, searching assignments, and the final exam. The second does the majority of the organization, copying, and corrects all assignments related to the final project. Divisions are not always absolute; each steps forward as needed. In addition, preparation and evaluation is done jointly and continuously.

This method of team teaching involves both instructors being in the classroom during all class meetings. Doebler and Smith define team teaching as a coordinated effort with only one instructor in the classroom on any given day. "Since team members do not regularly attend the sessions conducted by their colleagues they are not certain of the exact material that has been covered," is one disadvantage of the method documented by Doebler and Smith (1996, 87). The advantage of the Doane approach is that both instructors are aware of what happens every day in the classroom. Both are sure all material is covered while avoiding duplication. Therefore, planning is easier, any necessary revisions are apparent to both members of the team, and either can answer student questions. As an additional benefit, class is never canceled due to the absence of one instructor.

It is advantageous for students to have two librarians team teaching a research course. Since students meet with the librarians in a classroom setting, they are less intimidated in the library. Their research is enhanced because they feel comfortable asking either librarian for assistance on assignments for other classes.

During class students benefit from the opportunity to ask two different librarians for help. While students are practicing computerized searches, there are two instructors to provide assistance. This means the students are helped twice as quickly as they would be with a single instructor. If they have trouble understanding one person's explanation, hearing it a different way may solve the confusion. Also two different teaching styles have a better chance of matching the varied learning styles. As teaching styles vary, so do searching techniques. The students see there is more than one way to perform an effective search.

The classroom atmosphere is livelier and less formal as the librarians interact with each other and the students. The presentation is not a standard lecture format; interruptions are common and acceptable occurrences. As the first librarian addresses the class, the second librarian interjects additional explanations or examples. This allows both instructors to watch for questions or confused expressions and to attend to them immediately. Humor is used to make the class interesting and to foster an open atmosphere conducive to student participation. This style encourages an interactive classroom with all members of the class, including the instructors, teaching and learning from each other. Teamwork is modeled by the instructors and required of the students, resulting in a cooperative learning environment.

Team teaching also provides benefits for the instructors. Once the course is developed, the individual workload is reduced. The grading is divided in half according to assignment. To assure consistency, one librarian grades all

assignments leading to the final exam and the other grades all assignments leading to the culminating bibliography. Time spent on developing assignments, producing handouts, writing exams, and preparing daily lesson plans is shortened through the sharing of these tasks.

Collaborative teaching eliminates some of the stress associated with bibliographic instruction. No one feels alone in what is usually an isolated situation. On those days when nothing seems to go right, help is standing there. As stated by Oka, LaGuardia, and Griego, "We feel less harried when sharing the load with a colleague, we believe we give better presentations by playing off each other, and we get energized by each other's enthusiasm" (1994, 75).

The Information Retrieval Skills course is constantly evolving. For example, assignments are reworked, Internet searching has been added, and teaching methodologies are evaluated and revised each semester as the class is taught. Alone, this constant revision would seem overwhelming. With two librarians to support each other, provide feedback, and decide what needs to be amended and what works well, the modifications become a natural part of the team teaching process.

Before entering the team taught classroom, certain issues must be considered. Usually a class belongs to an instructor who makes all the decisions regarding the course content and classroom management. In a team situation, one cannot be territorial or defensive. Both librarians must be equal partners. This

means being secure enough to see differences as an asset, allowing for discussion of all aspects of the course, and being open to learning from one another.

The two instructors must be comfortable with each other, able to communicate, and respectful of one another. This involves a willingness to listen, to try new ideas, and, at times, to relinquish a former practice. Sometimes this means trying an activity one instructor doubts because the partner is enthusiastic and believes in it. At other times it may mean giving up a favorite assignment to make time for something new. The success of the course is dependent upon the success of this partnership.

Team teaching cannot succeed if the instructors do not present a united front. If communication between the instructors appears to be lacking, students will attempt to undermine the objectives of the course in a team teaching environment. Therefore, in all aspects of the class, communication must be apparent and the instructors must be in agreement when students are present. When presenting material in the classroom, disagreements must be avoided. For example, differences in searching styles should be presented jointly without judgment or bias. In addition, when a student approaches one of the instructors to request special treatment such as an extension of a deadline or change in a grade, it is imperative that the librarians discuss the situation before an answer is given.

Time constraints can be another concern. Both librarians must be out of the library during class time. This can create scheduling conflicts which must be addressed. Non-teaching library personnel must take on added responsibilities to

cover the absence of those teaching. Communication and cooperation are essential to enlisting the support of the entire library staff. We believe the benefits to the students makes finding the solution worthwhile.

Although secure in the knowledge that either librarian could teach the class alone, team teaching is a choice made because it significantly contributes to the quality of instruction. Seeking solutions to any and all difficulties is worth the effort. The course is better, teaching is improved, and the benefit to students is immeasurable.

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Appendix A

TERM PAPER/RESEARCH PAPER SEARCH STRATEGY

TOPIC

Write down all the key terms, subject headings, and synonyms that could possibly describe your topic.

SUBJECT ENCYCLOPEDIAS

Go to the Reference stacks on this floor and select an appropriate encyclopedia for your topic from the subject-arranged guide on top of those stacks: get *BACKGROUND ARTICLE* and *BIBLIOGRAPHY*.

BOOKS, AUDIO TAPES, PAMPHLETS

Using the titles and/or authors found in the bibliography of the encyclopedia article, go to the *OPAC* and search by author or title for one of the entries. At the short entry for the item, press **"B"** for the full record. Look at the subject headings listed for the item. Use the *LEGAL SUBJECT HEADING* to find all the books we have on your topic.
By getting a call number for a particular book, you get a *PLACE TO BROWSE ON THE SHELVES*.

ARTICLES IN PERIODICALS AND NEWSPAPERS USING INDEXES AND ABSTRACTS

Go to the Index stack area on the first floor and select the appropriate indexes and abstracts from the subject-arranged guide on top of these stacks. For paper indexes, consult the thesaurus of subject headings and/or the latest bound volume of the index to decide upon the subject heading(s) to use. You may need to translate any abbreviated titles of magazines by using the list of abbreviations at the front of the printed index. For CD-ROM searches, consult the subject list (sometimes called a thesaurus) on the disk. When using the *Wilson Indexes* on CD-ROM, consult

the *Browse Mode* to find the subject headings. Locate an article containing your material. Most CD-ROM indexes do not use abbreviations. Check the Kardex file to see if we ever received that issue. Retrieve the full journal from the stacks or microformat area: Get *SPECIFIC ARTICLE, POSSIBLE BIBLIOGRAPHY.*

GOVERNMENT PUBLICATIONS

Go to the *Publications Reference File* (PRF) in microfiche, *Congressional Information Services Index* (CIS Index), the *Monthly Catalog*, or the *Autographics CD-ROM Index* to locate specific U.S. Government documents in the Depository collection located on the first floor of the Library. (Some documents are now cataloged and can be found using the OPAC). Get a *SPECIFIC DOCUMENT, A PLACE TO BROWSE IN THE DOCUMENTS,* and/or *A BIBLIOGRAPHY.*

Appendix B

FINAL PROJECT

As a final project for this class, you are required to find 20 possible sources on a topic of your choice. To accomplish this, you will follow the Term Paper/Research Paper Search Strategy.

--the list of citations must include at least each of the following:

a. an encyclopedia article (from a subject encyclopedia)(1)
b. books (2)--1 from OPAC & 1 from another source
c. periodical articles (2)--at least 1 scholarly (an explanation of why this is an example of a scholarly journal must accompany this citation)
d. government document (1)
e. newspaper article (1)

State your topic in a theme sentence. Define the topic giving all the **key terms, subject headings and synonyms** you will use to research this topic.

Arrange your citations according to the search strategy. You must type your citations using a consistent bibliographic style; then, indicate where the citations were found. For each item, you must note whether or not Doane has the item. For example:

Coltelli, Laura. Winged Words. Lincoln, Ne.:University of Nebraska Press, 1990. (OPAC) [yes]

The (OPAC) indicates where this citation was found, and the [yes] indicates that Doane owns this book. Put [no] if the book or article is not available here.

If any of the citations you find are incomplete, you must note what is missing.

Write a short paper(no more than two pages) explaining what you learned from this project and how using the search strategy will benefit your future research.